

CHAPTER 152C MESSAGE THERAPY

Referred to in §147.74, 147.76, 261B.11, 272C.1, 423.2, 710A.1, 710A.2, 710A.2B, 710A.7

Enforcement, §147.87, 147.92
Penalty, general, §147.86

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152C.1 Definitions.

As used in [this chapter](#), unless the context otherwise requires:

1. “Board” means the board of massage therapy created under [chapter 147](#).
2. “*Massage therapist*” means a person licensed to practice the health care service of the healing art of massage therapy under [this chapter](#).

3. “*Massage therapy*” means performance for compensation of massage, myotherapy, massotherapy, bodywork, bodywork therapy, or therapeutic massage including hydrotherapy, superficial hot and cold applications, vibration and topical applications, or other therapy which involves manipulation of the muscle and connective tissue of the body, excluding osseous tissue, to treat the muscle tonus system for the purpose of enhancing health, muscle relaxation, increasing range of motion, reducing stress, relieving pain, or improving circulation.

4. “*Reflexology*” means manipulation of the soft tissues of the human body which is restricted to the hands, feet, or ears, performed by persons who do not hold themselves out to be massage therapists or to be performing massage therapy.

92 Acts, ch 1137, §1; 98 Acts, ch 1053, §29, 30; 2000 Acts, ch 1185, §2, 3; 2004 Acts, ch 1065, §1, 2; 2007 Acts, ch 10, §130

Referred to in §152C.5, 152C.7A

152C.2 Massage therapy advisory board created — duties. Repealed by 98 Acts, ch 1053, §43.

152C.3 Requirements for licensure.

1. The board shall adopt rules pursuant to [chapter 17A](#) establishing a procedure for licensing of massage therapists. License requirements shall include the following:

a. Completion of a curriculum of massage education at a school approved by the board which requires for admission a diploma from an accredited high school or the equivalent and requires completion of at least six hundred hours of supervised academic instruction. However, educational requirements under this paragraph are subject to reduction by the board if, after public notice and hearing, the board determines that the welfare of the public may be adequately protected with fewer hours of education.

b. Passage of an examination given or approved by the board.

c. Payment of a reasonable fee required by the board which shall compensate and be retained by the board for the costs of administering [this chapter](#).

2. In addition to provisions for licensure, the rules shall include the following:

a. Requirements regarding completion of at least twelve hours of continuing education annually regarding subjects concerning massage and related techniques or the health and

safety of the public, subject to reduction by the board if, after public notice and hearing, the board determines that the welfare of the public may be adequately protected with fewer hours.

b. Requirements for issuance of a reciprocal license to licensees of states with license requirements equal to or exceeding those of [this chapter](#). The rules shall provide for issuance of a temporary reciprocal license for licensees of states with lower requirements.

3. A massage therapist licensed pursuant to [this chapter](#) shall be issued a license number and a license certificate.

[92 Acts, ch 1137, §3; 93 Acts, ch 71, §1; 98 Acts, ch 1053, §31 – 33; 2011 Acts, ch 57, §1](#)
 Referred to in [§152C.5, 152C.7](#)

152C.4 Practicing as a massage therapist without a license — employment of person not licensed — civil penalty.

1. The board, or its authorized agents, may inspect any facility that advertises or offers the services of massage therapy. The board may, by order, impose a civil penalty upon a person who practices as a massage therapist without a license issued under [this chapter](#) or a person or business that employs an individual who is not licensed under [this chapter](#). The penalty shall not exceed one thousand dollars for each offense. Each day of a continued violation after an order or citation by the board constitutes a separate offense, with the maximum penalty not to exceed ten thousand dollars. In determining the amount of a civil penalty, the board may consider the following:

- a. Whether the amount imposed will be a substantial economic deterrent to the violation.
- b. The circumstances leading to or resulting in the violation.
- c. The severity of the violation and the risk of harm to the public.
- d. The economic benefits gained by the violator as a result of noncompliance.
- e. The welfare or best interest of the public.

2. Before issuing an order or citation under [this section](#), the board shall provide written notice and the opportunity to request a hearing on the record. The hearing must be requested within thirty days of the issuance of the notice and shall be conducted as provided in [chapter 17A](#). The board may, in connection with a proceeding under [this section](#), issue subpoenas to compel the attendance and testimony of witnesses and the disclosure of evidence and may request the attorney general to bring an action to enforce the subpoena.

3. A person aggrieved by the imposition of a civil penalty under [this section](#) may seek judicial review in accordance with [section 17A.19](#). The board shall notify the attorney general of the failure to pay a civil penalty within thirty days after entry of an order pursuant to [subsection 1](#), or within ten days following final judgment in favor of the board if an order has been stayed pending appeal. The attorney general may commence an action to recover the amount of the penalty, including reasonable attorney fees and costs. An action to enforce an order under [this section](#) may be joined with an action for an injunction.

[92 Acts, ch 1137, §4; 98 Acts, ch 1053, §34; 2000 Acts, ch 1185, §4](#)

152C.5 Practice or use of title — license required.

1. The practice of massage therapy as defined in [section 152C.1](#) is strictly prohibited by unlicensed individuals. It is a serious misdemeanor for a person to engage in or offer to engage in the practice of massage therapy, or use in connection with the person's name, the initials "L. M. T." or the words "licensed massage therapist", "massage therapist", "masseur", "masseur", or any other word or title that implies or represents that the person practices massage therapy, unless the person possesses a license issued under the provisions of [section 152C.3](#).

2. It shall be an affirmative defense to a prosecution for a violation of [subsection 1](#), in addition to any other affirmative defenses for which the defendant might be eligible, that the defendant is a victim of a crime that is a violation of [section 710A.2](#).

[92 Acts, ch 1137, §5; 2000 Acts, ch 1185, §5; 2019 Acts, ch 106, §1](#)

152C.5A Massage therapy modalities study.

The Iowa department of public health, with input from the board, shall conduct a study regarding the modalities associated with the practice of massage therapy. The study shall

be conducted with the input of licensed massage therapists, reflexologists, and unlicensed persons practicing modalities related to massage therapy. The objective of the study shall be to determine which modalities shall be included under the definition of massage therapy and require licensure, and shall include, but not be limited to, a recommendation regarding the licensure of reflexologists. The study shall focus on the health, safety, and welfare of the public regarding each of the modalities reviewed. The department shall submit a report summarizing the results of the study and making recommendations regarding modality inclusion to the general assembly by January 15, 2004.

[2003 Acts, ch 70, §1](#)

Referred to in [§152C.7A](#)

152C.5B License and government-issued identification — peace officer request.

1. For purposes of [this section](#), unless the context otherwise requires:

a. “*Government-issued identification*” means any of the following:

(1) An unexpired driver’s license issued by any state, territory, or district of the United States.

(2) An unexpired identification card issued by any state, territory, or district of the United States.

(3) An unexpired United States passport.

(4) A naturalization certificate issued by the United States citizenship and immigration services.

(5) An unexpired permanent resident card, also known as a green card, issued by the United States citizenship and immigration services.

(6) An unexpired employment authorization document issued by the United States citizenship and immigration services.

b. “*Peace officer*” means any of the following:

(1) Sheriffs and their regular deputies who are subject to mandated law enforcement training.

(2) Marshals and police officers of cities.

(3) Peace officer members of the department of public safety as defined in [chapter 80](#).

(4) Special security officers employed by board of regents institutions as set forth in [section 262.13](#).

(5) Such employees of the department of transportation as are designated peace officers by resolution of the department under [section 321.477](#).

(6) Employees of an aviation authority designated as peace officers by the authority under [section 330A.8, subsection 16](#).

2. A person licensed or who purports to be licensed under [this chapter](#) shall, upon the request of any peace officer investigating a complaint of illegal services, present a copy of the person’s valid Iowa massage therapist license and a government-issued identification to the peace officer. A person who violates [this subsection](#) commits a serious misdemeanor.

[2021 Acts, ch 123, §1](#)

Referred to in [§710A.1, 710A.2, 710A.3](#)

NEW section

152C.5C Announcements to the public.

1. For purposes of [this section](#), “*announcement to the public*” means the use of any print media, broadcast media, subscription internet site, internet site available to the public, or any other means to do any of the following:

a. Advertise or market massage therapy services.

b. Provide a site for clients to post reviews.

c. Offer a virtual marketplace at which goods or services may be offered or clients may be solicited.

2. A person shall not do any of the following in an announcement to the public:

a. Represent that another person is licensed under [this chapter](#) when the person knows, or has reason to know, that the other person is not licensed.

b. Falsely represent the person’s self as licensed under [this chapter](#).

c. Offer the services of massage therapy if paragraph “a” or “b” of [this subsection](#) applies.

- d. Offer, or imply the offer of, services that violate state law.
3. A person who violates [subsection 2](#) commits a serious misdemeanor.

[2021 Acts, ch 123, §2](#)

Referred to in [§710A.3](#)

NEW section

152C.6 Enforcement. Repealed by 2017 Acts, ch 122, §23.

152C.7 Suspension and revocation of licenses.

The board may suspend, revoke, or impose probationary conditions upon a license issued pursuant to rules adopted in accordance with [section 152C.3](#).

[92 Acts, ch 1237, §11](#); [98 Acts, ch 1053, §35](#)

152C.7A Temporary exemptions.

An individual who is engaged exclusively in the practice of reflexology or an unlicensed individual who is practicing a modality related to massage therapy, and whose professional practice does not incorporate aspects that constitute massage therapy as defined in [section 152C.1](#), shall not be subject to the licensure provisions of [this chapter](#) for a one-year period beginning July 1, 2003, and ending June 30, 2004. Beginning July 1, 2004, an individual who is engaged exclusively in the practice of reflexology or an unlicensed individual who is practicing a modality related to massage therapy shall be subject to licensure pursuant to [this chapter](#) unless, based upon the recommendations contained in the massage therapy modalities study as provided in [section 152C.5A](#), the practice of reflexology or an unlicensed individual who is practicing a modality related to massage therapy is permanently exempted from massage therapy licensure.

[2003 Acts, ch 70, §2](#)

152C.8 Transition provisions. Repealed by [2008 Acts, ch 1088, §79](#).

152C.9 Exemptions.

[This chapter](#) shall not apply to the following persons:

1. Persons who are licensed to practice medicine or surgery, osteopathic medicine and surgery, chiropractic, cosmetology arts and sciences, or podiatry in this state; or athletic trainers, technicians, nurses, occupational therapists, physical therapists, or physician assistants licensed, certified, or registered in this state or acting under the prescription or supervision of a person licensed to practice medicine or surgery or osteopathic medicine and surgery in this state.

2. Persons who are licensed, registered, or certified in another state, territory, the District of Columbia, or a foreign country when incidentally present in this state to teach a course of instruction related to massage and bodywork therapy or to consult with a person licensed under subtitle 3 of this title.

3. Students enrolled in a program recognized by the board while completing a clinical requirement for graduation performed under the supervision of a person licensed under subtitle 3 of this title.

4. Persons giving massage and bodywork to members of their immediate family.

5. Persons practicing reflexology.

6. Persons engaged within the scope of practice of a profession with established standards and ethics utilizing touch, words, and directed movement to deepen awareness of existing patterns of movement in the body as well as to suggest new possibilities of movement, provided that the practices performed or services rendered are not designated or implied to be massage therapy. Such practices include, but are not limited to, the Feldenkrais method, the Trager approach, and mind-body centering.

7. Persons engaged within the scope of practice of a profession with established standards and ethics in which touch is limited to that which is essential for palpitation and affectation of the human energy system, provided that the practices performed or services rendered are not designated or implied to be massage therapy.

8. Persons incidentally present in this state to provide services as part of an emergency response team working in conjunction with disaster relief officials.
[2004 Acts, ch 1065, §3](#); [2008 Acts, ch 1088, §141](#)